

There are around 100,000 overcrowded social rented households in London. Why won't the Mayor act?

According to the [English Housing Survey 2017/18](#) published in January 2019, overcrowding in social housing is at its highest level since it started measuring overcrowding in 1995/96. The same survey showed that overcrowding levels are eight times higher among social housing tenants than among owner occupiers. And a recent [National Education Union poll](#) of teachers in England found that 46% believed that "poor quality, insecure, overcrowded or temporary accommodation" was affecting their students' learning.

The London Mayor's [Housing in London tables](#) 2018 (based on the English Housing Survey 2015/16) shows almost 100,000 (13.4%) social rented homes are overcrowded. The same tables also show the proportion of children living in overcrowded homes being 36% in the social housing sector compared to 23% nationally and 28% in the private rented sector compared to 15% across the country.

In response to questioning by the London Assembly Planning Committee, London Tenants Federation (LTF) and the LSE, last November, the Mayor recently produced a revised assessment of need for family sized social housing relating to his draft new London Plan. The reassessment doubles the requirement for three beds or more, from 7% of social rented homes to 14%.

Will the Mayor now translate these revised figures into a target for family social rented housing? Currently there are no such targets for any tenure. His Plan's Policy H12 on Housing Size Mix actually advises boroughs not to set housing size targets for market properties.

In relation to low cost (social and affordable) rent, boroughs are advised to 'provide guidance', taking into account not only evidenced local need but also the impact of welfare reform and the cost of delivering larger homes (both factors which would discourage councils from promoting larger social rented homes).

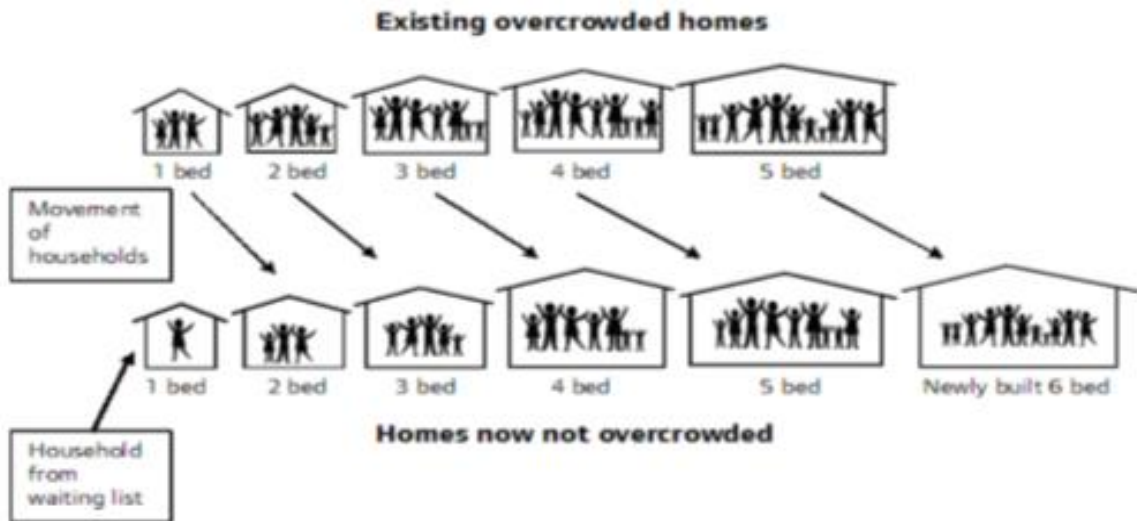
Crucially, guidance is not the same as a planning requirement. LTF members fear that, without a clear London-wide target set by the Mayor, boroughs will continue to miss opportunities to build larger homes.

The Plan suggests that many of London's single hidden homeless households could benefit from new one-bedroom properties. But this forgets that allocations policies are very unlikely to favour single people, unless they are within a defined category of vulnerability.

But the solution to overcrowding has long been there: a [2011 London Assembly Housing Committee Report](#) demonstrated that the cumulative effect of building one six-bedroom house has the potential to lift 36 people out of overcrowding, leaving, at the end of the chain, an empty one-bedroom home. (See diagram overleaf)

LTF believes a target for 50% of new social rented homes to be family sized is what is needed, with a clearly stated goal of addressing overcrowding in social housing within ten years. Come on London, we can do this.

Figure 3: The effect on overcrowding of building one large home



36 = Number of people taken out of housing need by building one 6 bedroom home and moving other overcrowded households into the resulting vacancies.